

REASONS FOR THE REPEAL OF THE TESTS.

In a Letter to a Friend in the Country.

With Allowance.

SIR,

THE King's late gracious *Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*, having been most thankfully received throughout the Kingdom, it is with some Surprise, that I read in your Letter, That many of the *Clergy* of the established Church, bandy against it; and are inciting the *Gentlemen* of your Neighbourhood, to a Dislike of his Majesty's Resolution to recommend to his *Parliament*, the Repeal of the *obnoxious* *Act of Sixty*, and infusing *Tells*; and that they are, at the same time, sily insinuating a Suspicion into Protestant Dissenters, of a *Snake*

in the *Grass*, and by that Art, working them into their Faction, for upholding those *Engines of Mischief*, in opposition to his *Majesties* declared Pleasure, and against the Inclination, and undoubted Interest of the Bulk of his People: I say, I am surprized at your *News*, for those very *Clergymen* you tell me are playing this Game, did of late make such a high Pretence to *inimitable Loyalty*, that a Man could not, with common Charity suspect, that *Persecution* it self would provoke them, to start from it, either in Principle or Practice; wherefore I (being as it seems too easy) concluded that the *Churches* Grandure and Wealth, together with her *Religion*, being secured, the Example of her *Sons* would have raised the *Peoples* Esteem of the *King's* Grace, but finding my Mistake, and that I did not rightly comprehend those *Gentlemen*, allow me to add to my last, which told you my Thoughts of the *Penal Laws*, the Reasons which occur to me, for the taking off the *Tests*, and therein I doubt not of convincing you, that they were framed to serve a Turn, and that a very wicked one, that of the *Seculsion* of our present Sovereign, and the Providence of God having in a very eminent manner appeared against it, you will then agree with me, that every Step towards it, is to be *abhorred*.

I shall in the first place take notice, what the *Tests* are, because I conclude many of our *Neighbours* to whom this Letter may be imparted know little more of them, than the Name.

We have the first *Test* in the Act of 1673. Entituled, *An Act for preventing Danger, which may happen from Popish Recusants*.

That Act disables all Persons to bear Office, Civil or Military, or to have Command, or Place of Trust under the *King*, or to be of his Household, or in his Service, who shall not take the Oaths of Supremacy, and Allegiance, and receive the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper*, according to the Church of England, and make and subscribe this Declaration.

I A. B. do declare that I believe that there is not any Transubstantiation in the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, or in the Elements of Bread and Wine, at or after the Consecration thereof, by any Person whatsoever.

And the Refuser, is by that Act made incapable of any Office, or to prosecute any Suit at Law, or in Equity, or to be a Guardian, Executor, or Administrator, or to be capable of a Legacy, or Deed of Gift, and shall forfeit five hundred Pounds.

The Second *Test*, is in the Statute (In the memorable Year 1678. (when we were warm, almost to the Degree of Madnets) entituled, *An Act for the more effectual Preserving the King's Person and Government, by disabling Papists, from sitting in either House of Parliament*. There, after a flattering Preamble, it is enacted, That *Peers and Commons*, do

73

fore they sit in Parliament, shall take the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and make and subscribe this Declaration. I A. B. do solemnly and sincerely in the Presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, That I do believe, that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is not any Transubstantiation of the Body and Blood of Christ, at, or after the Consecration thereof, by any Person whatsoever; and that the Invocation, or Adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other Saint, and the Sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and Idolatrous.

And it enacts, That no Peer of any of the three Kingdoms, nor convicted Recusant, who takes not the Oaths, and subscribes the Declaration, shall come into the Presence of the King or Queen, or into the Houses where either of them Reside, &c.

The Offender is judged a Popish Recusant, and to suffer as such, and disabled to hold any Office or Place of Trust, or to sit or vote in Parliament, or to have the Benefit of the Law, and shall forfeit 500 l.

The Sworn Servants of the King, not having conformed to the Act of 1673, shall conform to this Act, or be disabled to hold their Places, and be subject to the aforesaid Penalties; *Notwithstanding* the Proviso in the Act, that it should not extend to his Royal Highness, the Duke of York, it is well known to all who remember the *Transfession* of that Bill, in the Two Houses, that it was chiefly intended against his now Majesty, and that when the *Proviso* was brought in, it was stiffly opposed, and when carried, which was with Difficulty, the active Men who framed and promoted the Bill, did acknowledge, That what they mainly aimed at, was eluded by the *Proviso*, which was (in order to the grand Exclusion) the Excluding his Royal Highness from the Lord's House, and from the Presence of his then Majesty. But to keep to my Word, I proceed to the Reasons for the Repeal of both the Tests.

They ought to be taken away, because they are unreasonable, and unjust (Circumstances are altered, and we cannot now expect, That they should be put in Execution; nay, it is altogether impracticable to do it.)

The King must be served, can it be thought Reasonable that it should be done, by such Persons only, who reject the Doctrines of his Majesty's own Faith? And to have it to be an absolutely necessary Qualification, for the King's Service, to renounce his Religion? Sure there is little of Reason, less of Decency, and good Manners, in pretending to impose upon his Majesty, that no Person may approach his presence, come into his Court, or be admitted to the Honour of his Service, but that therefore, he shall be deemed as an *Out-law*, deprived of the Benefit of prosecuting his civil Rights, rendered incapable of any Trust under

the *King*, and of receiving a *Gift*, or *Legacy* from Father, Mother, or Friend; but upon the Terms of declaring the *King* an *Idolater*. But methinks I hear some *Sticklers* in the Point in question, beginning to say, let the *King*, in *God's* Name, be served by whom he pleases, we will concede to the repealing the *Test* of 1673. which puts a rude and unreasonable Qualification upon his Majesty's *Servants*, but what need of *Roman Catholics* in Parliament? We will retain the *Test* of 1678. I shall therefore shew you, why I do think we ought to labour earnestly the sending both *Tests* together.

The *Test* of 1678, is very unjust, in that it deprives *Peers* of their Birth-right, for matters of *Opinion* in things merely *Religious*, they are *Conciliarii nati*; and as such, have an indisputable Right, to sit in the *Lords House* of Parliament. This *Test*, then, tho it contains only Controversies in *Faith*, is an high Violation of the great Right, and Privilege of the *Peers*, in excluding them from sitting, and serving the *King*, and *Kingdom*, in the Supreme Judicature.

I am sure in the time of the late *Usurpation*, we called out for freedom of *Parliaments* (which is destroyed by this *Test*) and decry'd their Seclusion of *Members*, who were not so, and so qualified; let us then, as lovers of *Parliaments*, be steady to that Principle, and use our best Endeavours, in our Spheres, for the abolishing the *Tests*, which alter the Constitution of the Government; and the rather, for that the Causes, or Pretences for these *Tests*, are ceased; if we do believe the *King* and his Government, not to be in danger from the *Roman Catholics*.

Designing and intriguing Men, have been long at this *testy*, testing Work, you remember the *Church-men* catcht the *Non-Conforming Ministers*, by a *Test* in 1665. in the Act we best know, by the Name of the *Oxford Act*.

Some time after (viz.) in the Year 1675. the same *Test* was set on Foot in Parliament, by the *Test-Mongers*, with design to have made it more Extensive, than to the *Non-Conformist Preachers* residing in a Corporation, for it incapacitated the *Peers* to sit in Parliament, without the qualification of that *Test*: It was carried in the *Lords House*, by Vote, after, and against such Debates, as it may be, no one Point ever had there: It appears, by the Journal of that House, that many Lords (of whom there are yet alive, the Marquess of *Winchester*, the Earls of *Bedford*, *Halifax*, *Charendon*, Lord *Grey of Rolleston*, and Lord *Wharton*) by their *Protest*, declared their Dissent; for that, the imposing an Oath, and that the Refusal should incapacitate them from sitting, and voting in the House, was unprecedented, and the highest Invasion of the Liberties and Privileges of the *Peers*, and most destructive of the Freedom of *Parliament*, because

because the Priviledge of sitting and voting in *Parliament*, is an Honour they have by Birth, and so inherent a Right, and inseparable from them, that nothing can take it away, but what by Law, must withal take away their Lives, and corrupt their Blood.

Was this sound *Doctrine* at that Day? (yes, it was, and as such prevailed, and the *Test* fell to the Ground,) then it must always be so; *Truth will be Truth*, let men change never so often; and I must believe that this Position will weigh, with our stickling *Sons of the Church*, who seem over fond of the *Tests*, when they see the Opinion of such great men, whose Names are celebrated, for Wisdom and Integrity, and to whom they pay so great a Deference; but to proceed.

It is highly necessary that these *Tests* be abrogated; this appears in that the *King* desires it, the *Papists* crave it, and the Interest of the whole Nation requires it: We are all then in Prudence to consent thereto; the retaining the *Test* is in Truth a denial of *Liberty of Conscience*, for it requires men, under Penalties, to declare themselves in matters of Faith, otherwise then they are perswaded, and so infringes this *Liberty*. His Majesty imposes not his Religion upon us, let us not then pretend to impose upon his Religion, and those who hold it, nor to burden their Consciences. He appears to consult the *Ease and Happiness* of all his Subjects, and would bury the dividing Occasions of our *Heats and Animosities*, which have too long disturbed and interrupted our Peace and Tranquility, Let us consider the Consequences of things, and not provoke the *King*, by a peevish and splenetic Dissent. We believe the *King* has a Conscience, we must esteem it an odd one, to think he can approve our holding the *Romanists* under these discriminating *Tests*; we may not so mistake him, he desires, and intends not to be denied, their *Ease and Security*, let us not break with him, in refusing it.

We have been taught to entertain very hard Thoughts of their Religion, and as we learnt to speak, we rammered out no *Papist*, no *Popery*; whence sprang this Aversion? Mainly, I am sure, from our Apprehension that *Blood and Cruelty* attended it; the *Roman Catholics*, tho sure of the *King*, are willing to concert and accommodate matters with us, and to deliver us from what we have so dreaded, their *Persecution*; upon the most reasonable and equal Terms, of being freed from the Danger of ours; I hope our established Church will bethink her self, and better consider things, than, by her stubborn Adhesion, to her *Laws of Severity and Force*, to incline us to love *Popery*, when we find it gentle and easy to be entreated. I profess I am too short sighted, to discern why the Church of *England*, doth so bestir her self to uphold the *Penal Laws and Tests*. Is she not in the Chair, and safe? I am very certain she thought

thought her self so, after she knew she had lost the King, and jogg'd on very jocosly, whilst she was permitted to annoy her Neighbours, by giving them the only Choice of *Conformity or Ruin*. The King promised to maintain her, so he doth, and will undoubtedly persevere to do, if she runs not her self into a Forfeiture of that Royal *Grace*. She seemed entirely to confide in the King's Word; it will be her Wisdom to do so still; she enjoys the *Churches*, and their ample Revenues, *what wants she? What would she have?* She looses nothing by repealing the *Laws*, but the *Power of Persecuting*, which she condemns in others. Could she with any regard to *Justice*, or pretence to *Sense*, conceive, that the King's Promise should mean, or be extended to maintain her persecuting tyrannizing Power over *Conscience*, which by the *Declarations of God*, and the King, is to be free; surely she forgot his *Majesty* to be amongst the Number of her *Non-Conformists*, when she dreamt the King would continue to her, a Power to extirpate *Dissenters*. Let her cease to be angry, and rebuke her Son's very unmannerly *sitting in Judgment* upon, and censuring the King's *Proceedings*: Let her, I say, be wise, and know her Duty, and Interest. The advice is requisite, she being at this day tampering to draw the *Fanaticks* into an *Association*, against the King's most gracious Purpose to them, and all his People; therefore, leaving her to weigh her present Methods with sedateness, if she pleases, I address my self to the *Dissenters*, admonishing and beseeching them, nor to be seduced into the Sin, of *Dissimulation* and *Ingratitude* to the King. They are in his Power, in effect, for *Life or Death*. For should he deliver them up to the *Church* (armed with what she so hotly contends to uphold, the *Penal Laws*) they have little else but Ruin in prospect, their *Dissent* renders their Liberties, and Estates forfeitable by her *Law*: Can they imagine the King should preserve them, from her Power of Compelling, which they esteem unreasonable and wicked, if they are found in *Confederacy* with those, who persecute him in his Religion? They cannot hope it, let them therefore improve this present Conjunction, for the abolishing this mischieving *Church-Tyranny*, they like and long for the thing, they see the way of effecting it, *let them give ease to all, and they make sure of their own*; the *Terms* are those of the Gospel (which always exploded *Force*) they have no Safety but in accepting them, therefore let them do it now, and be careful not to exasperate the King, by concurring in any indiscreet and spiteful *Opposition*, to the Being, and well Being of those of his *Persuasion*: But it seems the *Church* allures the *Dissenters* with specious Promises; surely they are not to be so *decoy'd*, they could never get *Terms of Peace*, when she had Power to make *War* upon them, hath she not held them under the Discipline of the *Rod*, and that with-

out the intermission of Ease, or Respite (*save what the Interposition of the Crown afforded*) ever since 1660. she never rested, till, by her easiness to the late King, and her caressing, but deceitful Promises to the Fanatics, she obtained the cancelling his late Majesties Declaration of Indulgence, then she set again to her pleasant Work (*tho' with God a strange Work*) the rigorous execution of her Laws, and if she did not her worst, she was pursuing it to the Day of his Majesties Declaration, which checking her, she is become sullen and Male-content.

The Church men (zealous to uphold the Tests) argue further with the Dissenters (*for without them they are conscious their Point is lost*) that if the Tests are taken off, the Papists will run away with all; that both religious and civil Liberties will be lost, by their getting a Parliament of their own Religion: By the way, this Suggestion is not attended with the accustomed Decency of the Church of England, to God and the King, but such Dissenters as have been compelled to come in, and have heard these Gentlemen preaching say, That we are not to do Evil, that Good may come of it; we are to trust God, and do our Duty; may tell them, that they believe, and therefore will practice those Truths: But,

I would demand of those Gentlemen, who will believe that all Faith and Laws may be violated, how they will prove our Security to lye in the single Act, which excludes Romanists from Parliament, it may without Controversy, be made as Difficult, to elude such Laws as may be proposed (*in exchange for this*) for our Security, and for quieting of our Fears, as 'tis to break through this Law: But to be brief with these Gentlemen, before I can believe, and fear to the Degree they seem to do, they must shew me where the Popish Gentlemen live, who shall constitute this dreaded House of Commons (*for we choose not the Lords*) and by what art they shall get themselves elected and returned; for my part, it cannot enter my Head, that the thing is practicable; I know some Counties which cannot furnish two Roman Catholic Gentlemen, to this purpose, nor so many Scores to vote for their Election, if they had such men: Indeed there are many of that Religion of great Quality, and large Estates, therein we may rationally conclude we have our Safety, not our Danger, for they (*knowing that vicissitude always did, and will attend humane Affairs*) desire a legal Security for themselves and their Estates. We have inbred Prejudices against their Doctrins, sufficient to prevent their making a Majority in Parliament: But it is insinuated that *undue and false Returns* may be made; yes, we did once behold an *upper House* so packed, and we know who did it, and to come nearer home, we do remember the Day, when a great Church Mans Admonitions in the House of Commons,

did not only countenance *false Returns*, but chose who should sit with them, and so bring in a fit *Member* to serve a Turn did by *Force* declare *Thirteen* to be more than three and *Twenty*; ay, and to my knowledge they gloried in it; that *Trick* was like him that contrived, and them that play'd it: But surely there lives not a man out of the Pale of the *Church*, we are talking of, so wicked, as to think the *King*, doth not detect the thought of so *base a Practice*: He that whispers a thing so greatly below the *King* will, for ought I know, suggest, That to Morrow, his *Majesty* will return us an House of *Commons* from *Downflow Heath*: Discourses of this kind may not be heard, but in *Bedlam*, or *Newgate*; therefore, adjourning them thither, for *Cure or Correction*; let us not think evil, or dishonourably of the *King*; and let our Temper and Moderation to *Roman Catholics* be such, that we may never feel the ill Consequences of leaving them under a Suspicion, that we *may lay* them for *Destruction*; let us yield them Security, and we shall be safe: His Majesty's Faith is pledged for *Liberty of Conscience*, during his Life, he desires to establish it by *Parliament*, and in the same way, to set the minds of all his Subjects free, by placing their Persons and Estates out of the reach of future Suffering, for *Conscience sake*. Let us all then be perswaded to meet the *King* cheerfully, in this so great, and so good a Work; and as we desire to have our own *Consciences* disentangled, let us set every mans free; and let it be our Care to live together in Charity and Peace, as the Children of one Family, that, as we are happy beyond our Hopes, and in *despite of our Fears*, in amost gracious *King*, he may see his own Happiness, in a dutiful, loyal, and loving People, and let us with *Extra* (when the great King *Arduennes*, decreed the *Jews* liberty, to do whatsoever should seem good to them after the Will of their God) say, *Blessed be the Lord God of our Fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the King's Heart.* I am, as before,

Your Servant,

LONDON,

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